

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings of claims presented in the application.

Claim 1 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:

a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;

a skin-protective ingredient containing layer ~~applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern~~ on one surface of said top sheet on a side mating with skin of a wearer such that the skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet to form an oily film on skin of the wearer while contacting the skin of the wearer; and

a support layer ~~formed over~~ coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire ~~said~~ support layer being fully soluble in water;

at a temperature higher than or equal to 25°C, solving in water of said support layer being promoted, and/or at a relative humidity of at least 30%, absorbing of moisture or solving in water of said support layer being promoted for exposing said skin-protective ingredient containing layer to skin of the wearer for permitting transfer of said skin-protective ingredient to skin of the wearer.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 1,

wherein said support layer is formed of at least one compound selected from the group consisting of polyethylene oxide having a molecular weight of from 100 to 500,000, polypropylene glycol having a molecular weight of from 100 to 10, 000, and polyvinyl alcohol having a degree of polymerization of from 300 to 4000 and a degree of saponification of from 50 to 99.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 1,

wherein said skin-protective ingredient containing layer is formed of a compound that forms said oily film on skin of the wearer.

said support layer being promoted for exposing said skin-protective ingredient containing layer to skin of the wearer for permitting transfer of said skin-protective ingredient to skin of the wearer.

Claim 9 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:

a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;

a skin-protective ingredient containing layer ~~applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern~~ on one surface of said top sheet such that a skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet and transferred to skin of a wearer for forming an oily film on skin of the wearer; and

a support layer ~~formed over~~ coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire said support layer being fully soluble in water;

said support layer being formed of at least one compound selected from among a group consisting of polyethylene oxide having a molecular weight of from 100 to 500,000, polypropylene glycol having a molecular weight of from 100 to 10,000, and polyvinyl alcohol having a degree of polymerization of from 300 to 4000 and a degree of saponification of from 50 to 99 for providing water solubility at a temperature higher than or equal to 25°C and for enhancement of moisture absorbability or the solubility in water at a relative humidity of at least 30%.

Claim 10 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:

a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;

a skin-protective ingredient containing layer ~~applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern~~ to one surface of said top sheet such that a skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet and transferred to skin of a wearer for forming an oily film on skin of the wearer, said skin-protective ingredient containing layer being in a liquified state at 35°C or higher; and

a support layer ~~formed over~~ coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire said support layer being

